

Restelo Neighbourhood: Expanding the Capital of the Empire with the First Portuguese Urban Planner

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Abstract

This article reviews the first phase of urban growth of the Restelo neighbourhood, which is located on the western limit of the city of Lisbon and was planned by João Guilherme Faria da Costa. Having taken place during development of the first proposal to Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan (*Plano de Urbanização da Encosta da Ajuda*, 1938) and the development of the Residential District of Ajuda Hillside – 2nd part (*Bairro Residencial da Encosta da Ajuda – 2^a Fase*, 1953), the Study of Economic Houses of Ajuda Hillside Neighbourhood (*Estudo do Projeto do Aglomerado de Casas Económicas da Encosta da Ajuda*, 1947-1952) will also be analyzed. This article aims to: i) show evidence that the various urban proposals developed by Faria da Costa came from the teachings of his masters at the *Institut d’Urbanisme de Paris*, the school chosen by the Portuguese Minister of Public Works, Duarte Pacheco, to educate the first Portuguese architect-urban planner; ii) demonstrate that the applicability of such teachings favoured the “urban scenario” sought by the regime of dictatorship. The recognition of the urban and architectural value of the first urbanization phase of the Restelo neighbourhood justifies a revision of the concept of urban preservation. The seven decades which have passed since the presentation of Faria da Costa’s primitive urban plan do not appear to be enough to speak about heritage. The exposure of the various stages of urbanization that this territory was subjected to enables an understanding of the city and its architectural and urban history.

Introduction

With this article I would like to critically review the first phase of urban growth of the Restelo neighbourhood, the plans of which have so far been relatively unknown, thus making it an interesting subject for the development of a PhD research project¹. This lack of knowledge is due to the fact that this part of the city is closely associated with a dictatorial political regime and most of the streets and houses reflect the imposition of a “traditional Portuguese architecture”.² It is worth highlighting: 1) the visionary attitude of Duarte Pacheco, who sent a

¹ d’Almeida 2013

² Acciaiuoli 1991

Portuguese architect to be educated in the field of urbanism in Paris and then to apply his work in Portugal and pass this knowledge to his peers; 2) the Faria da Costa's urban vision was set in the context of the development of the territory, whose prime location favoured the creation of a large "background scene" to Jerónimos Monastery, valuing the axis defined by two national monuments.

This paper is organised into six parts. After this introduction, the second part describes the conception of urban laws by "Duarte Pacheco, Minister of Dictatorship" which were defined to strengthen the image of the Portuguese territory. The third part focuses on Faria da Costa's experience in Paris and his return to Portugal as "the first Portuguese urban planner". The fourth part highlights the urban design of Restelo neighbourhood and exposes the urban form which resulted from the first intervention in the western limits of the Capital of Portugal. What happened "after the death of the Minister of Public Works" is developed in the fifth part of this article and finally the conclusions of this paper contained in the six part.

Duarte Pacheco, Minister of Dictatorship

Noticing the chaotic growth of most of the Portuguese territory, Duarte Pacheco (1900-1943),³ Minister of Public Works (1932-1936 and 1938-1943), promoted the creation of urban plans that could reinforce the image of Portuguese cities, especially of "Lisbon, capital of the Empire"⁴. Thus, the General Urbanization Plans, as defined by Decree-Law N° 24.802 of December 21, 1934 replaced the General Improvements Plan which had been in place since 1865. These regulations provided provinces with more than 2.500 inhabitants and urban centres or areas of touristic interest (as designated by the government) with the power to plan their territory. However, in most of the cases, local councils lacked the technical expertise in the field of urbanization, which was stated in the decree. In the absence of Portuguese planners and at the same time the desire to avoid the controversy of hiring foreign professionals, the same minister simultaneously initiated a contest for a scholarship at the prestigious *Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris* (1933).

The first Portuguese urban planner

João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906-1971), who was not able to enrol in the Portuguese Architects Association because he had not defended the final architecture thesis, was the young architect who won the scholarship. His successful design of the "Minimal House", which in subsequent work gave rise to the "Holiday House at Rodizio" (Costa, 1942), granted him the opportunity to temporarily transfer his residence and school to the French capital. It was here that he would specialize with some of the most respected professionals such as Alfred Donat Agache (1875-1934), Henri Prost (1874-1959), Jacques Grebér (1882-1962), Georges Sébille (1879-1962), William Oualid (1880-1942), Gaston Jèze (1869-1953) and especially Etienne de Gröer (1882-1974), with whom he maintained contact outside of Paris. The first Portuguese urban planner was influenced by Sébille, who was firstly in charge of the study of the Extension Plan of Paris (1920-1921) and a member of the Paris Region City Planning (1932). Faria da Costa presented as his final assignment the Plan of Arrangement and Extension of Figueira da Foz City and Its Region⁵ (*Plano de Arranjo, Embelezamento e Extensão da Cidade da Figueira da Foz e Sua Região*) which allowed for him to obtain the

³ Costa 2012

⁴ Ferreira 1987

⁵ Costa 1937

respective diploma on June 19, 1937. Back in Portugal, he was immediately integrated into the newly formed team of Urban Municipal Services at the Lisbon City Council in January 1938. He was responsible for shaping the city's urban expansion and in charge of plans such as Ajuda Hillside (1938), the South area of Alferes Malheiro Avenue (1945-1948), link to the 24 Julho Avenue to Comércio Square (1947), among other urban plans.

Restelo Neighbourhood

The Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan was one of the first tests for the orderly expansion of the Portuguese capital. It was part of the Lisbon Master Plan (1938-1948), a plan which was coordinated by the Urban Planner and Technical Adviser of Lisbon City Council, Etienne De Gröer. This “new town”, which led to the commonly called “Restelo neighbourhood”, was designed to accommodate 36.000 inhabitants within 300 hectares. This was the first "big breath" of the municipality in the urbanization of such a vast territory and the plan's impact had to be presented by the Regime. The Lisbon Pavilion at the Portuguese World Exhibition (*Exposição do Mundo Português*, 1940) was the first advertisement of the project. It was held in Belém, in the land located to the south of the slope and opposite of the Jerónimos Monastery. The exhibition site enjoys exquisite views over the Tagus River. This fair received three million visitors, both national and foreign, who were left with the memory of the visionary ideals of the minister of the dictatorship. The city expansion to the western limits, on one of the most beautiful hills of the municipality of Lisbon, not only ended the territory but also served as the landscape for the marginal route of Estoril (*Avenida Marginal*), which was a result of the Expansion Plan of the West Region of Lisbon (*Plano de Urbanização da Costa do Sol*, 1934-1936), designed by Agache.⁶



Lisbon's framework map with the limits of Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan.

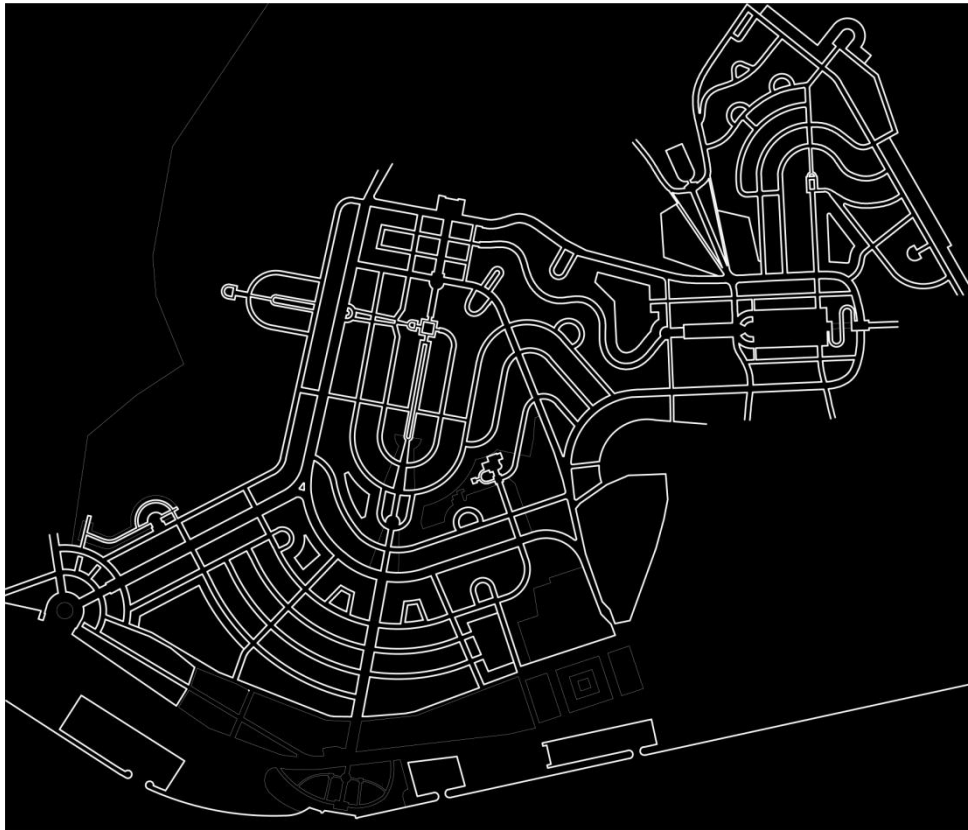
Source: The author.

Ensured by a new resolution which allowed for the “expropriation for public purposes” (Decree-Law N° 28.797 of July 1, 1938), Faria da Costa demolished farms and palaces that spread over the region. In a *Beaux-Arts* style, he wrote the plan with three major highways lined with vegetation that would take advantage of the urban backdrop and strategically taking

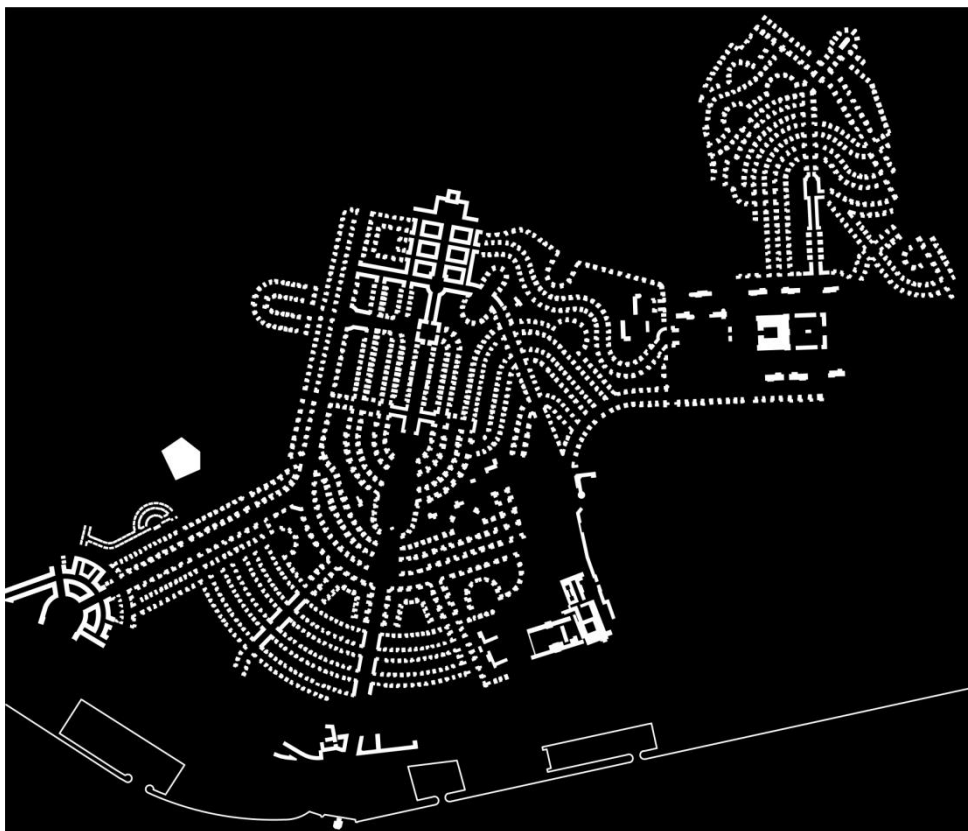
⁶ André, Marat-Mendes, Rodrigues 2012

advantage of panoramic views over the Tagus River. Applying the zoning principle, differentiating residential areas of commercial ones or free space, the plan's axial motif is defined by two monuments of the fourteenth century, the Tower of Belém and St. Jerome Chapel. The Restelo Avenue, which outlined the areas to be urbanized in the first and second urbanisation plan process, follows the contours and guides the concentric streets that look over the river in the form of an amphitheatre. Recalling the proposal of Walter Burley Griffin (1876-1937) for Canberra, the new capital of Australia in 1911, and taking advantage of the sloping terrain, Faria da Costa designed a residential neighbourhood to be seen from Belém (including the exhibition space). He placed the buildings of greater height upon higher elevations of the slope and single-family homes, which were surrounded by gardens and placed in isolation in the plot, along the "galleries that make up the audience." A large public building would finish the urban ensemble and try to exhibit some classical monumentality as Henri Prost in Casablanca (1915-1922). In this case, the planned big public building was a church with a large symbolic significance and religious belief of the Portuguese nationalist dictator António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970). Spatially preceding the blocks of buildings with great height, the linearity of the large and central avenue is interrupted by a square flanked with shell-shaped buildings (Portuguese *escudo*) which are officially recognized as propaganda symbolizing the "Lisbon of Salazar".

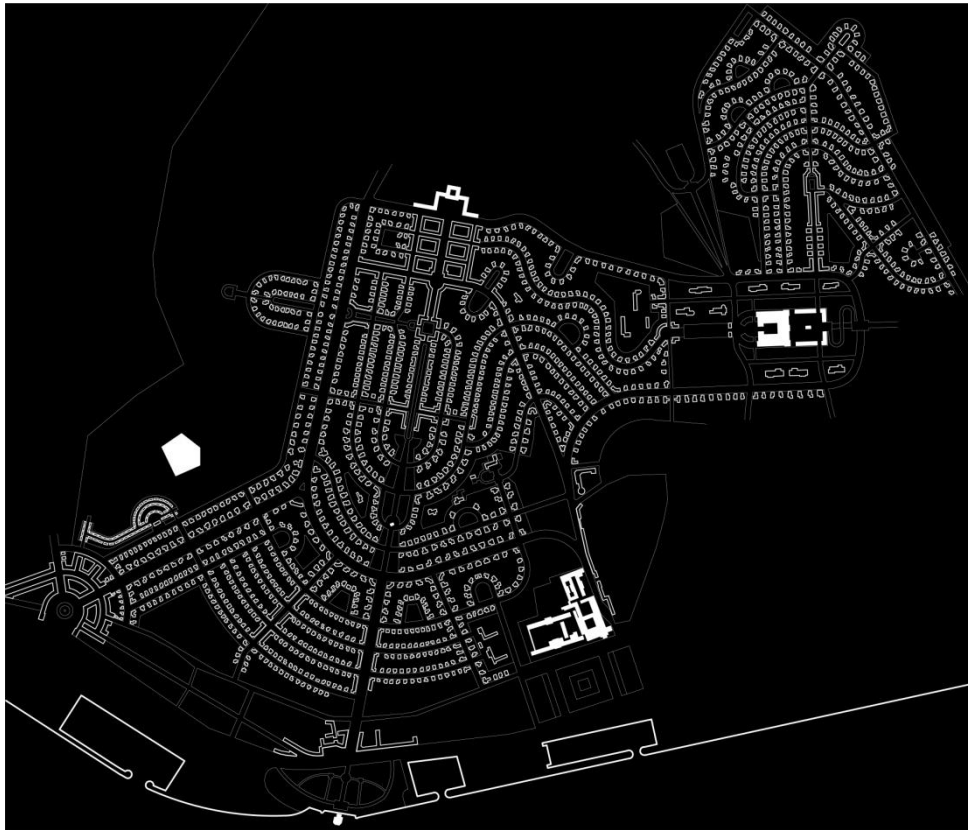
Following the concept of Howard's Garden City (1850-1928) to integrate the city and the countryside, Faria da Costa intended to create a self-sufficient neighbourhood where town and country were together. A green belt defined its limits: the Monsanto Forest Park, dedicated in 1927 by Jean Claude Nicolas Forrestier (1861-1930) when he gave his opinion on the urban needs of the city. The negative effects of urban inhabitation were diluted with the inclusion of broad garden squares, which remind us of the ones designed in Letchworth (1902-1906) by Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) and Barry Parker (1867-1947). However, self-sufficiency was not attained when the planned commercial venues along the houses were not built. These mercantile centres should have created neighbourhood units and granted a certain morphological and social homogeneity, as they served the residential population's daily needs.



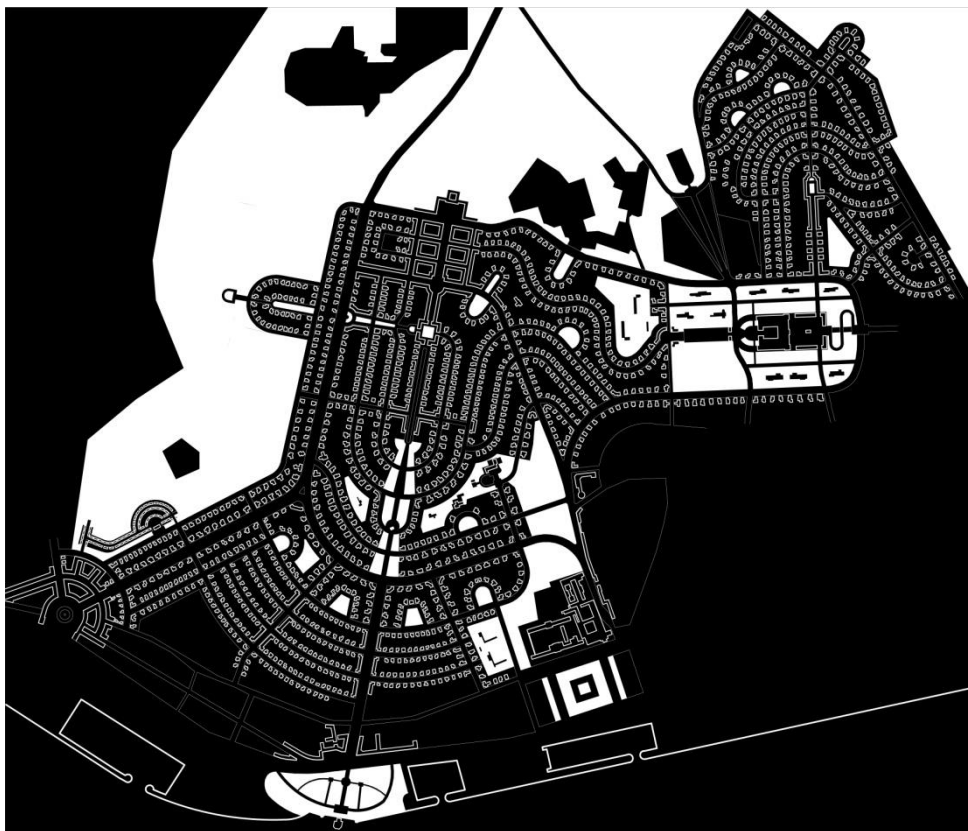
Streets map of the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan. Source: The author.



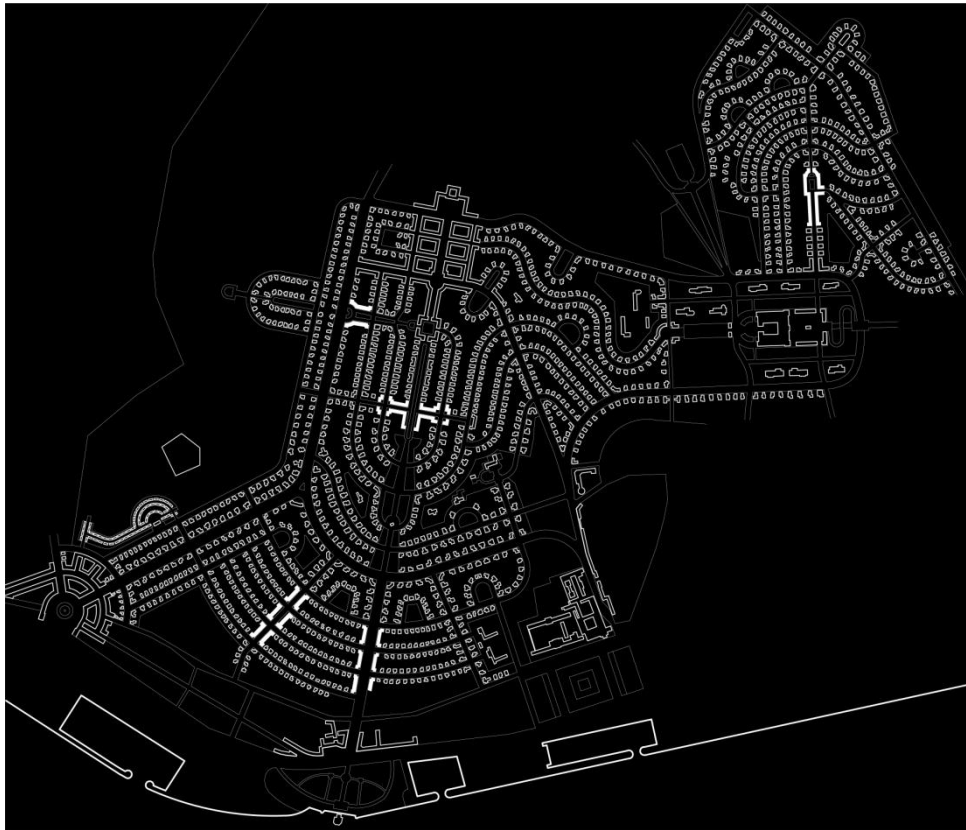
Buildings map of the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan. Source: The author.



Monuments map of the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan. Source: The author.



Green public spaces map of the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan. Source: The author.

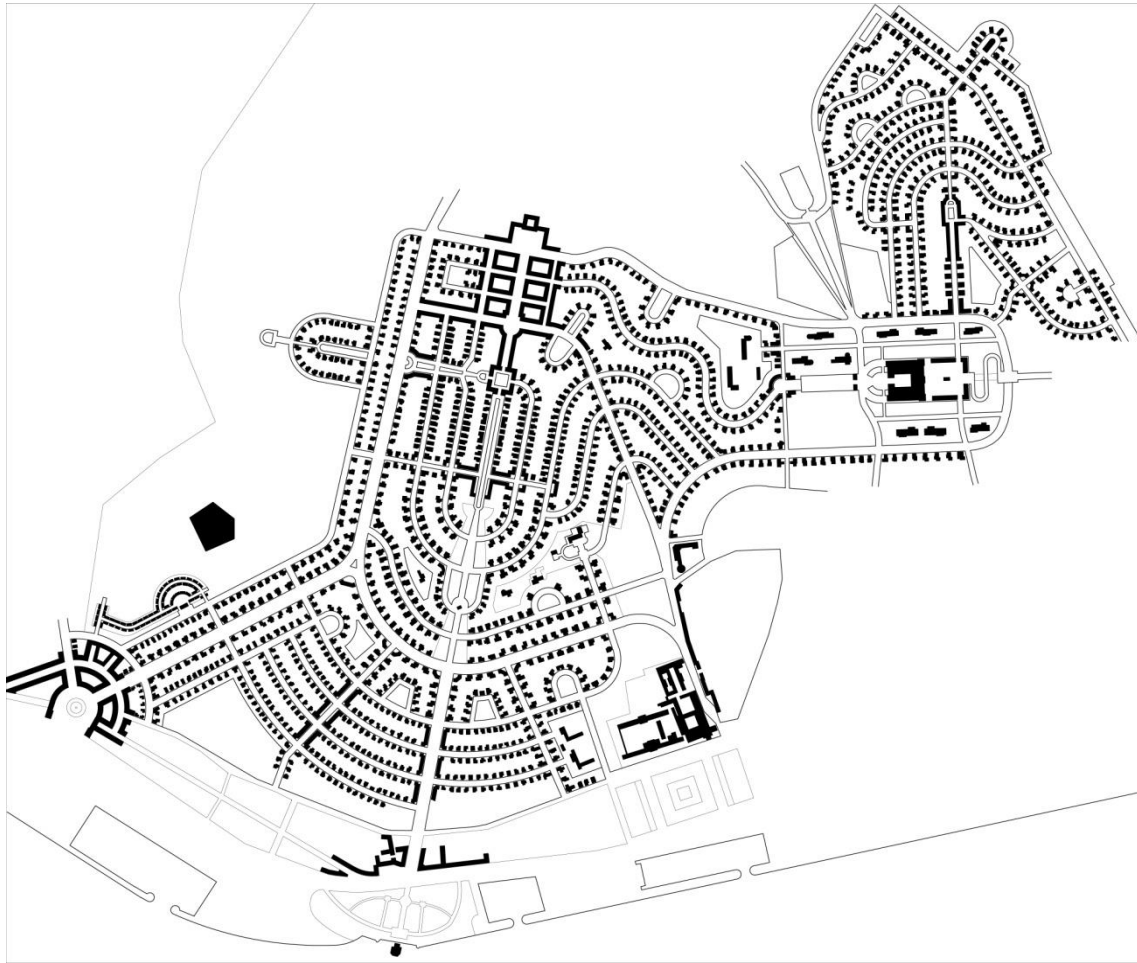


Commercial venue map of the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan. Source: The author.

The reference work of Sousa Gomes (1937) “*Lisboa – Da sua Vida e da sua Beleza*” (Lisbon – Of its Life and its Beauty) gives us an overview of how the capital was seen and conceived in this period of time. In the book, the numerous possibilities of urbanization of these hills are discussed. Faria da Costa was sensitive to all of these qualities and the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan is the reflection of this perception.

“What admirable prospects could we offer in this gentle slope that rises up from Belém to the Ajuda’s high! [...] what an admirable for political purpose and educational would be the symbolism of this monumental town!”⁷

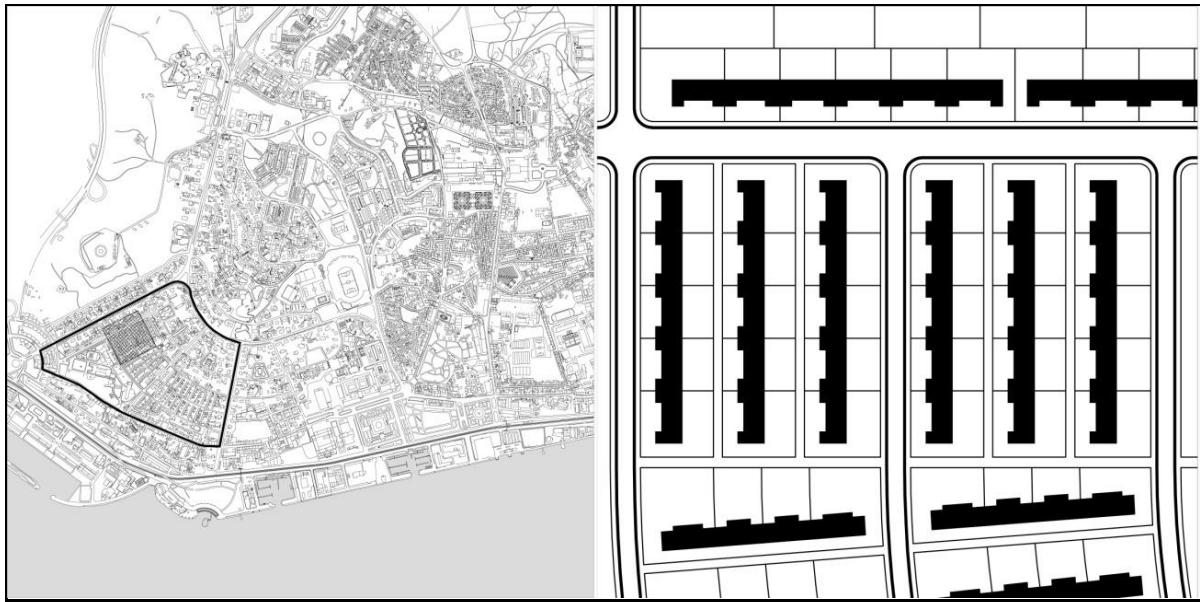
⁷ Gomes 1937, 83



Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan. Source: The author.

After the death of the Minister of Public Works

With the death of Duarte Pacheco, the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan and construction of the Restelo neighbourhood immediately conceded to the first changes with the development of the Study of Economic Houses of Ajuda Hillside Neighbourhood (*Estudo do Projeto do Aglomerado de Casas Económicas da Encosta da Ajuda*, 1947-1952), which was also developed by Faria da Costa. The urban planner Faria da Costa now had the difficult task of integrating a new plan into the previous one. Some of the planned single-family homes, isolated within their plots and designed for people with considerable financial resources were to be replaced with more than 460 single-family expandable worker houses built in a linear fashion and designed to offer equal life conditions to public workers and their families. The land was acquired at an auction by the person who would offer the greatest amount. In regard to the worker homes, these were acquired with the completion of 240 monthly payments over a period of 20 years to members of the unions sponsored by the dictatorship regime, such as public workers, state workers and workers from the municipal councils with employment contracts.



*Urban form detail of the Study of Economic Houses of Ajuda Hillside Neighbourhood.
Source: The author.*

The unconditional defence of single-family houses conducted by Raul Lino (1879-1974) had an “influence on the result of the housing policy of the *Estado Novo*”,⁸ which was a designation from the corporatist dictatorial regime of the Portuguese Government installed in 1933. As Oliveira Salazar once stated to the French journalist Christine Garnier, “the possession of a house brings peace to family, love, the fair sense of ownership”.⁹

In the first government headed by Salazar, previous legislation which governed the construction of worker houses (1918 to 1928) was revised and a renewed deliberation was implemented – Decree-Law N° 23.052 of September 23, 1933 – which defined the existence of two new housing classes: Class A for a monthly salary of 600\$00 to 1.200\$00 and Class B for a monthly salary of 1.100\$00 to 1.700\$00. Each of these houses consisted of three different types: I, II, III, which were for childless couples, couples with few children and with numerous children, respectively. A decade later, the Decree-Law N° 33.278 of November 1943 dedicated two new classes which corresponded to a superior quality: Class C for a monthly salary of 1.500\$00 and Class D for a monthly salary of 2.100\$00 to 3.000\$00. In the Restelo neighbourhood only C and D class houses were built, which was a departure from the previously instalment planned. These houses were intended, as allowed for by the plot in question, for the creation of a small private garden in the back yard/patio for family subsistence and a small garden to plant flowers in the main front area. As determined under the law, any of these homes could be enlarged by a predefined project by the Department of National Buildings and Monuments (DGEMN), the government agency of the Ministry of Public Works which was responsible for the “Section of Worker Houses”.

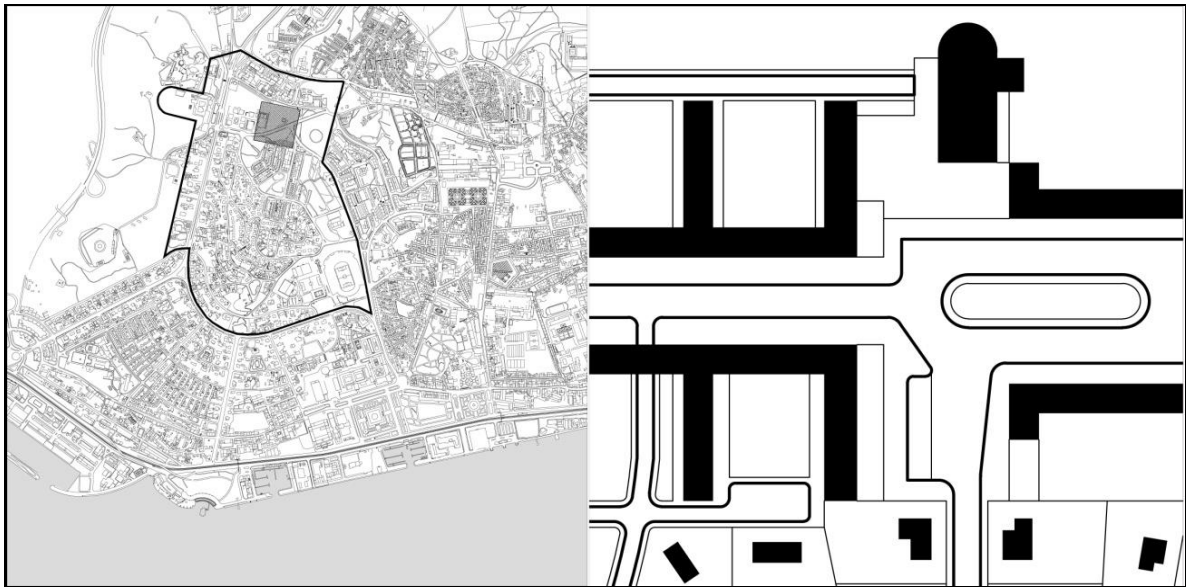
⁸ Pereira 2013, 227

⁹ Garnier 1952, 51

Conclusions

Faria da Costa resigned from the Lisbon City Hall in 1948 and became a technical advisor to the Urban Municipal Services from that time on. Despite this fact, the municipality leader Álvaro Salvação Barreto (1890-1975) called upon the first Portuguese architect-urban planner again in 1953 to continue the extension of the neighbourhood to the north of Restelo Avenue and review the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan with the development of the Residential Neighbourhood of Ajuda Hillside – 2nd part (*Bairro Residencial da Encosta da Ajuda – 2ª Fase*, 1953). This plan was never implemented, however, since a new president gave rise to a renewed urban intervention.

Faria da Costa sought to partially break the central avenue with the creation of a promontory around St. Jerónimo Chapel and an axis perpendicular to the main boulevard that not only marks the intervention limits, but also hosts bands of four-story buildings. Despite this, the snaking streets that follow the steepness of the slope, with the constant presence of single-family houses, were partially replaced in the 1960s and 1970s with modern hierarchy roads where multifamily buildings prevail.



*Urban form detail of the Residential Neighbourhood of Ajuda Hillside – 2nd part.
Source: The author.*

Today, the high demand for housing in this Lisbon neighbourhood led to a pronounced speculation in property which increased prices and lead to multimillionaire transactions taking place, some of which were for households that were built for workers of the past and thus do not serve the demands of today's buyers. Frequent renovations have altered the view of the architectural complex, making it increasingly difficult to identify the worker Restelo neighbourhood nowadays.

Faria da Costa proposed the west expansion of the “Capital of the Empire” with the urban development of the Ajuda Hillside Urban Plan. However, the designers who followed him did not continue with this growth; they planned each parcel of land with a particular urban plan that had nothing to do with the intentions of the first dictatorship and with the initially

developed solutions of the first Portuguese urban planner. In this territory, the architecture and urbanism illustrates the intentions of a dictatorial regime. The area allows us to better understand Portuguese history. Unfortunately, not only the worker houses have suffered transformations over the years, but also the other private buildings and venues have as well, most of them being not classified as national heritage.

English version revised by Pedro Bento d'Almeida and Karl Eckert

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